

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Questions from Mr M J Greenburgh submitted under Standing Order 7(10) on the “Call In” of the decision on Hatters Lane School

“I have now read the supporting papers and the report of the Cabinet Member. I should say at once that the papers are much clearer in setting out the reason why the Cabinet Member intended to act as he did. They do set out a logic for so doing.

However, in order to be thorough I would like members of the committee to be satisfied on the following issues. Please offer these as suggested lines of enquiry for the committee:

- 1 Taking the assumption that the most important success factors for a school are the leadership and the staff; in what ways does the present proposal address the chronic lack of quality leadership or the ability of the school to recruit and retain talented staff?
- 2 Has an audit been undertaken of the accommodation at the school and does the present proposal deal with any areas of weakness or criticism levelled by OFSTED in terms of the accommodation and provision of science, and other specialist facilities?
- 3 The next critical success factor is a supportive parent partnership – what steps have been taken to use the Section 11 outreach and ethnic minority community workers to engage with the community and set home school contracts for behaviour and achievement?
- 4 What steps have been taken to strengthen the Governing Body and ensure that it is able to lead the improvement of the school?
- 5 Sixth form provision is touched on in the report – what steps have been taken to work in partnership with Wycombe College or other sixth forms (schools) to provide courses at Hatters Lane. To do so will attract staff and diversify the use of the site making it more a community resource and associate the school with successes.
- 6 What thought was given to locating other public facilities on site such as a health center, library or other community facility?
- 7 I asked Mr Mooney to speak to Dr Andrew Povey, the Chair of Education in Surrey in May of 2000 and to speak to other LEAs that had tried Fresh Start (it was then being reported in the press that Fresh Start actually had a very poor success rate. I wanted Bucks to learn from these experiences.) I asked Dr Povey if he had been contacted, he said not. Who exactly did we speak to (if anyone)? Did we visit any Fresh Start schools? Have we spoken to any Fresh Start Heads (successful or otherwise) to learn from their experiences and how is this proposal different from the failed attempts at Fresh Start that have been reported in the press?
- 8 Accepting that we consulted very widely in Wycombe and that the DfEE are supportive of Fresh Start (it is their initiative) what external advice did we take from Educational Consultants or Beacon Authorities as to solutions to the problems associated with the school?
- 9 Denominational Schools are all very successful. Did we consider seeking voluntary aided status for the school and inviting the faith communities to work with us in running the school?
- 10 Is Mr Appleyard satisfied that this is the best option for Hatters Lane (as opposed to being the simplest or the cheapest, not that I am suggesting that it is either) and that the solution offered will lead to measurable improvement? If so, please specify the improvement together with the time-line and reporting arrangements.”

REPLY BY STRATEGIC MANAGER (SCHOOLS)

“Overriding point – the whole process was checked and approved by DfEE before they would accept the bid from us. Estelle Morris’ office only raised one question about procedure and we had dealt with it to their satisfaction.

1 The revenue support granted to us following the Fresh Start bid is specifically meant to help to address this point.

- Enhanced salaries can be offered to staff to make the school a more attractive prospect in recruitment and retention terms.
- An excellent Headteacher has been appointed, as has a Deputy Head and various senior staff – so far.
- The advertisements for the rest of the staff have produced a very large number of applicants and we hope to have the entire teaching staff in place before Easter, with support staff appointed by 31 May.
- Governors have not yet found it necessary to compromise on quality in order to fill posts.

2 An accommodation audit has taken place and the shortcomings of the premises raised in the report have all been addressed in the outline plan submitted to the DfEE, as part of the Fresh Start bid.

- Science labs are currently being completely refurbished.
- Plans are in hand to relocate and upgrade the Technology rooms.
- New PE facilities, including a purpose-built sports hall, are planned.
- New ICT facilities are planned.
- General improvements in the school’s environment and appearance are also planned – entrance, corridors etc.

3 The school is currently planning its induction programme for September, which will include individual parent/pupil/tutor interviews for every student in the first week of term.

- Newsletters from the school have gone to all homes to inform families of the developments.
- All pupils have filled in questionnaires – they chose the school’s name and new uniform design and will soon be designing the school’s badge.
- Community involvement in the development of the strategy for the school has included Wycombe REC. (Ranjit Dheer was on the Commission).
- A local church is supporting and paying for a part-time youth worker in the school for five years.
- The school has made various efforts of its own to involve the local minority communities.

4 The new school has a completely newly constituted Governing Body, which has some commonality of membership with the old (to provide continuity, where necessary).

- This body has a totally different attitude to its work than the old GB has.
- The membership is very positive and has a clear view of its role, which is to achieve the establishment of a successful and improving school.

5 Sixth form provision is currently suspended in the present school. However, it is intended to open it again in the new school as soon as possible.

- We need to establish a successful 11 – 16 school as our first priority, then develop sixth form provision on the back of success.
- We need to be very careful to consider the demands of the Learning and Skills Council to see what we are required to provide etc.
- The ability to attract high quality staff is acknowledged as vital but the DfEE revenue support will allow us to do that in the short term. Sixth form provision will almost certainly be necessary for this in the future.

6 The Wycombe Commission made recommendations about the location of other public facilities on the site and these are being taken forward at the moment.

- We referred to youth work above.
- Adult Education is actively considering moving its HQ for Wycombe to the site.
- The SENSS team is looking to expand its use of the school as a base.
- The METAS team is considering the possibility of relocating back to the school.
- Other agencies which expressed an interest in possible use of the premises will be contacted in turn.
- **It is very important to note that the DfEE was very clear that we had to develop the school first, with the community facilities coming after – not the other way round.**

7 We did not speak to Surrey but we spoke to the London Borough of Merton, visited Brighton etc.

8 Contact was made with Stanley Goodchild, Chief Executive of 3E, the consultants involved in the running/Fresh Start of the Surrey School and discussed the relevance of their experience. It turned out that the plan for the re-launch of the school was to change the admissions criteria and, in effect, create a selective school. Since this was not possible for us and other factors in the process appeared to be remarkably similar to those which we had already discussed with London Borough of Merton and Bright EAZ, we did not pursue this contact. Therefore, we had indirect contact through their consultants.

- Fresh Start seminar (PJM and MH).
- Lengthy discussions with DfEE.
- **Experience is not great in this field – not a large number of people to talk to.**

9 We entered into discussions with the CE diocese about the possibility of an Aided/Controlled school but dismissed the idea because of the ethnic mix of the area.

10 See bid P2 for success and time criteria.

- Fresh Start is a three year programme (DfEE regs) after that the school will be subject to closure like any other school that does not measure up to OFSTED.
- HMI will continue termly monitoring visits as if the school was still in special measures.
- We would expect LEA monitoring visits to continue in the short term.
- The school wishes still to be subject to LEA/HMI monitoring – it is the Headteacher's view that we should all carry on as if the school is still in special measures."